

Psilocybin ('magic') mushrooms ^[1]

1) Hi Alice,

I have been thinking of trying psilocybin mushrooms. Please tell me what effects it has on the brain, body, and whatever else you can tell me... I have heard shrooms are safer than LSD and even that shrooms are harmless!!! Also tell me if it is common that shrooms are laced with LSD. Thanx and I love your site!

2) Dear Alice,

How long do "shrooms" stay in your system?

Answer

Dear Readers,

If you fancy some facts about fungi, you've come to the right place! Psilocybin, more formally known as 4-phosphoryloxy-N,N-dimethyltryptamine, is a hallucinogenic chemical in certain types of mushrooms found in tropical and subtropical regions of South America, Mexico, and the United States. Never heard of it? You may know psilocybin better as 'shrooms, little smoke, magic mushrooms, or purple passion. All of these names describe fresh or dried mushrooms that can be added to food, brewed in tea, or swallowed in the form of a capsule or tablet. They can have different effects depending on the amount consumed; reactions range from muscle relaxation and hallucinations to panic attacks and impaired memory, and the psychoactive effects of psilocybin may last as long as six hours. However, it can take more than twice as long to clear from the system completely. Every user's "trip" (or experience an altered sense of reality) is different, and with the number of psilocybin mushrooms out there (at least 75 varieties have psilocybin or a closely related substance, psilocin), it may be difficult to distinguish between those that are toxic and those that aren't. In fact, many fungi are laced with additional substances, such as the hallucinogen lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD). However, that's not to say that one drug is necessarily lower in risk than the other. Read on for more information on 'shrooms and how they compare in risk to LSD!

About 10 to 30 minutes after ingesting psilocybin, the gastrointestinal tract absorbs and converts the chemical into a compound called psilocin, which is responsible for the psychedelic effects

that have come to be associated with 'shrooms. Hallucinogenic substances such as these cause users to trip. Psilocin exerts these effects by binding with serotonin receptors located within and beyond the central nervous system. While the duration of the peak effects is typically only between 30 minutes to two hours, psychoactive effects may last as long as six hours. When ingested orally, psilocin is generally cleared from the system in just under 5 hours. As for psilocybin, the amount of time it takes to be cleared from the system nearly triples to about 15 hours. Although this can differ person to person, it's unlikely to find any remnants of 'shrooms in a person's system after 24 hours. Interestingly, there's no commercially available method of detecting psilocin in urine. With that said, some 'shrooms contain a compound called phenylethylamine, which — when there's enough present — can be excreted in urine and thus detected.

What can you expect to feel on a trip? Smaller doses may cause people to feel a sense of detachment from their bodies as though they're observing themselves. They may also see brilliant arrangements of color and light and even fantastical images. When a larger amount is consumed, users may experience physical sensations, such as lightheadedness, shivering, sweating, nausea, anxiety, and numbness of the tongue, lips, and mouth. Use of this drug can also change a user's perception of time, making minutes seem like hours. Interestingly, recent literature has shown that psychedelic mushrooms may be beneficial for treating people experiencing depression. What's more, there's some evidence that they may stop headaches in chronic sufferers. While psilocybin mushrooms generally don't cause life-threatening physical reactions, experience with this drug can vary widely, and a number of factors influence the kind of trip one may end up on. A person's expectations, physical and emotional health, previous drug experience, mood, as well as the amount of the drug and the setting in which it's consumed can all contribute to the drug's effects. Further, pre-existing mental health conditions may cause unpredictable reactions to this type of mushroom. For example, if a user experiences anxiety or fear during a trip, they may feel physically or emotionally uncomfortable (sometimes described as a "bad trip"). Some people who have had bad trips later report distressing memories and, among more frequent users, flashbacks. Keep in mind that choosing the wrong mushroom can be potentially fatal. In fact, taking toxic mushrooms by mistake is considered one of the highest risks of using 'shrooms. Fortunately, psilocybin mushrooms aren't considered addictive and most users decide for themselves when they're done using. That being said, 'shrooms can have some undesirable long-term effects including impaired memory and possible tolerance, both to psilocybin and other hallucinogens such as LSD and phencyclidine (PCP).

How do psilocybin mushrooms compare to LSD? While both may produce similar effects, trips on LSD tend to last longer. As is the case with 'shrooms, there's always the chance that the LSD one plans to use isn't exactly what they think it is. There's presently no way of knowing what combination of chemicals makes up street LSD, and, as for 'shrooms, it may be the case that what's being marketed as psilocybin is actually store-bought mushrooms laced with LSD or PCP. On this note, the psilocybin variety of mushrooms may be particularly difficult to identify, both in wild and dried form, as there are similar-looking fungi that also cause hallucinations. To add even more uncertainty to the mix, synthetic forms of psilocybin and psilocin — although less common due of the cost and difficulty of producing them — produce similar effects as their natural counterparts, but often lead to a less predictable trip.

For those considering 'shrooms, it may be helpful to ask yourself a few questions. Where are you

acquiring psilocybin? With whom are you planning to use them? Where do you plan to do so? The answers to these questions will help inform what factors to consider in terms of safety and potential risks. For more information on hallucinogens and other drugs, check out the *Go Ask Alice!* [LSD, PCP & Other Hallucinogens](#) [2] section of the [Alcohol & Other Drugs](#) [3] archives. Another helpful resource is the [National Institute of Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)](#) [4], which contains usage statistics and links to fact sheets and publications.

Alice!

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- [3] <http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/alcohol-other-drugs>
- [4] <http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/hallucinogens>
- [5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/alcohol-other-drugs>
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